

JOHNSTON (C.)

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ORATION

BEFORE THE

Medical and Surgical Society

OF BALTIMORE,

AT THEIR THIRD ANNIVERSARY.

January 18, 1858.

BY CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTON, M. D.



BALTIMORE:

PRINTED BY JOHN D. TOY.

1858.

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BALTIMORE, January 23, 1858.

DEAR SIR,

The undersigned have been appointed a Committee by the Medical and Surgical Society to tender you the thanks of the Society for the very able and beautiful Address delivered before them on the occasion of their late Anniversary, and to request a copy of the same for publication.

Very truly, yours, &c.

J. W. HOUCK, M. D.

J. GILMAN, M. D.

L. H. STEINER, M. D.

TO CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTON, M. D.

BALTIMORE, January 25, 1858.

GENTLEMEN,

I am in receipt of your favor of 23d inst. In answer I beg leave to say, that it gives me great pleasure to comply with the wishes of the Medical and Surgical Society of Baltimore, communicated in so flattering a manner by yourselves; wherefore I transmit you herewith a copy of my Address.

Very truly, yours, &c.

CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTON.

J. W. HOUCK, M. D.

J. GILMAN, M. D.

L. H. STEINER, M. D.

Committee.

O R A T I O N .

MR. PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY:

THE past year has been signalized by the most remarkable events. The Ocean, to an unprecedented extent, has risen in its fury and engulfed treasure and human victims. War has stirred the nations and put on his most hideous front; Death, cruel and pitiless, has whetted the sword, and directed the fatal lance against the innocent bosom of the young, the feeble, the defenceless. Disaster mounted upon the down-treading, iron-hoofed charger, Speculation, has traversed both continents, and involved the commercial world in distress and ruin—murder, wanton and unprovoked, stalks unpunished in our midst; and the insecurity of life and property is unparalleled save in the most barbarous ages. And yet, advancement, peace and comfort reign in the profession to which we belong—her science burns with a purer ray: public confidence in her power is

increased; and secure from flood and tempest, and pecuniary suffering, her followers spread her aegis over the afflicted, and carry blessings and consolation into the dwellings of the needy, the suffering, and the oppressed.

Contentment, like faith, needs no testimony of assurance; but there are those who require yet disregard the proof of self-experience or of a comparison with others: consequently—let me bring this remark home to ourselves—do we so often find the medical man dissatisfied and complaining in the early part of his career, and not to seem conscious of the privileges he enjoys, privileges which, if he have any fitness for his calling, he would exchange disadvantageously for those of any other pursuit.

We are assembled, Mr. President, to greet the New Year and each other with rejoicing, and to cast the cypress without hyssop, over the buried pleasures of the year that has gone. The table before us is laden with luxurious plenty, and the generous wine flows sparkling from the flagon; we have withdrawn ourselves, for a while, from the toil and anxiety of business; wherefore I deem the occasion fitting for the consideration of the aims and objects of the Profession of

Medicine, the interrupted duties of which we will presently re-assume.

It has been remarked that no mistress is so exacting, and at the same time, so ungrateful, as Medicine; and the Poet-Doctor has uttered the warning to

“Spurn the Art that every care defies
Till age sits glassy in (the) sunken eyes:”

and this remark and this counsel are either right or wrong. *Right*, if the sole recompense of the Physician were wealth and ease, the fruition of hopes that appear to be realized by the successful merchant, by the bulls and the bears; but *wrong*, if it can be shewn that the man uttering these sentiments has *not fairly understood* the nature of the profession which honors him as he may also honor it, the object and the end of his just endeavors in its pursuit, and more than all, the character of the rewards which his mistress holds out to him, and his own capacity for their acquisition and enjoyment.

Without fear of contradiction it may be asserted that our profession has most noble *objects*, and that her *aims* vie in their unselfishness with the profession of the divine. She alleviates the sufferings that are humanity's inheritance from

Adam; she gives battle to death insidious and open; she stands before the "pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth in the noon day;" and she catches the first cry of the new being as it throws off its wrappings of dependency. She roams the fields with Flora, in quest of potencies stowed away in phytogenate crypts; digs into the bowels of the earth for elements having health-imparting virtue—and she explores the recesses of the "vast deep," drawing thence animal and vegetable organisms, of which she knows the healing power and its application. She unravels the intricate tissue; compels a confession of structure under the microscope; and extorts from expiring function the secret of its working. The Mechanic Arts are her humble assistants; Chemistry is her tributary; and robed in ermine, she sits in judgment with Truth and Mercy as her associates.

What return does Medicine ask for the varied and important services rendered by her? what indeed can compensate her for constant solicitude and self-sacrifice in the person of her minister? It is not wealth, brother Physicians, the recompense must be higher, for although "gold buys the science, 'tis Heaven rewards the heart."

I am not unnecessarily eulogistic, Mr. President; nor would I underrate the claims of the Practitioner of Medicine to such pecuniary consideration as best enables him to meet and discharge the duties imposed upon him. I have passed through what is denominated "period of struggle" of the young Physician, and I can fully sympathize with those who are ardent and eager but gloriously inactive. Yet really the trial of waiting for a practice, of "hope deferred" is an essential benefit; for patience and fortitude are thereby tested and strengthened, faith is made firmer, and leisure is afforded for the acquirement of that solid and extended information which is of inestimable service in after years. Besides, business that is easily obtained is fickle, and is sure to be slighted and lost, whereas what is hardly earned is prized and cherished. And come it will, but in accordance with the qualities which are necessary to secure it—*merit*, as regards knowledge, is not, however, sufficient; and although the trade or business of Medicine may rapidly accumulate in the hands of some by reason of a certain tact or friendly influence, yet I hold that legitimate success, that which a man is best fitted for bearing, will always, at *proper*

time, crown the devotion of every one who earnestly strives for it. It was, I opine, with a very bad grace, that Doctor Holmes caused the Doctor to be stricken from his sign—had his wooing been unrequited? had Apollo smiled upon his “lines on the old Frigate Constitution,” and as god of Medicine, frowned upon his paper on Puerperal Fever?

Medicine, ever young and beautiful, must be wooed with *unselfish* love, with an ardent and constant affection, with untiring, unremitting devotion. And the striving of the Physician is not for himself, for his own aggrandizement; nevertheless the reward held out to him, it may be from afar, is sure to be *his* after the term of probation is passed. He must have zeal as well as skill, fidelity as well as ambition to act, and merit to secure confidence as well as to gain it. Thus it must appear that not every one who cries “open unto me,” is a suitable candidate for admission; and misconception of the aims and tendencies of the Profession of Medicine and of individual fitness for the assumption and discharge of its duties, has filled many a breast with vain repinings.

The recompense of the true Physician is of two

kinds, subjective and objective, in self and out of self, or it may be said incidental and accidental. To the first belong the cultivation of the noblest, the kindest feelings of the heart; the continual widening of the circle of the purest sympathies; the fortification of ability and will to promote the welfare of others; the brightening dawn of a clear conscience into perfect noon day. Besides, as student, he feels his growing power, and is filled with delightful emotions as Truth discovers herself to him more and more fully. And all this is irrespective of the apparent extent of relations with the great world, for, as there are many stars, so our profession has many spheres, of which the smallest and most unobtrusive is not without its influence and importance in promoting the great end. The weightiest duties are not imposed on all alike; neither is a man accountable for more than this, that he shall do the best that is possible for him under the circumstances in which a higher power has placed him.

The objective rewards—the accidental ones in fact—are first, the place in society which the acknowledgments of his fellow men assign him, in honor of the *man* and the Physician, and as placing his example more conspicuously before

the world. A more elevated position and increasing influence in their turn, afford at once a wider scope for his energy and faculties, and a quantitatively livelier satisfaction in their exercise. And when he has stored up in a common treasury the knowledge of his predecessors with that of his own gleanings, may he guide the footsteps of inexperience over the path that he has trod, and watch serenely the growth of love and friendship like the lengthening of evening shadows.

Last to be mentioned as a reward is *gold*, because it is not deserving of a prominent place, inasmuch as it should be regarded less as a compensation than as a means which renders continuous endeavor possible. It is not attempted to be denied that the labors of the Physician, like those of other men, should procure for him the means of subsistence, or even a comfortable independence; yet it must not be forgotten that *wealth* gained, no matter by what toil, is only a trust in the hands of the steward.

But a few years since there was one who gave heed to the faithful teachings of our honored University, and, in meekness of spirit and with holy aim, devoted himself—his whole strength—to that profession of which we also are members.

He shrank from the wranglings and contentions of the law, and with singleness of purpose made his peaceful dwelling where *disease* and *want* sought relief and protection. His great thought was Truth—his day-dreams were of her, his nightly visions were beautiful but from her presence. He roused the drooping spirit, cheering the weary sick man with hopes of better days, while he watched with absorbing zeal the changing phases of his malady. He gazed with untiring vision upon the conflict of disease with frail mortality so long as the ebbing pulse declared that the contest was still waging; and when the rattle of death proclaimed life's battle lost, he scrutinized, with careful sense, the ravages of the destroyer.

A companion, a prey to the abhorred *variola*, besought his aid and solicitude, when the nearest of the victim's kin remained securely afar from the loathsome pestilence;—and cheerfully did he perform his shining part until the sufferer no longer lived for earth.

When contagion, with fatal approach, was wafted to our shores, he silently but courageously advanced to interpose his arm between the pest and his fellow men; until, at length, the death

from which he sought to snatch others seized *him* in its close embrace. His fame is not sounded, his praises live not upon sculptured marble; but he has his reward—and the name of Upton H. Berryman shall ever re-echo in the hearts of those who loved, and who dare to take him as an example.

It is the glory and the pride of the Medical Profession, that the appeal of humanity finds a response every where. Money is hardly a stimulus to exertion, and poverty meets with no denial—and the Doctor hurries with equal readiness to the bedside of the loathsome small-pox patient at home, and to that of his neighbor of other communities stricken down with yellow fever.

As the Physician has his pleasures, so has he also his trials and his sorrows, yet is he not without warm and gentle sympathizers—but trials, like the shadows in a picture, increase the intensity of the lights; and the joys of this life would give little satisfaction if nothing disturbed the monotony of an existence in which every want was gratified and every wish anticipated.

It is very certain that the *valueless* is neither coveted nor imitated, but that which is excellent and of *real worth* conjures up imposture.

The iron money of Sparta was not counterfeited, but coins of the noble metals are daily imitated and foisted upon the community. It is for this reason, also, that Quacks abound, and out-herod Herod to mislead the unwary while they stamp their base currency with the effigy of that Truth which is our own. The fiery Thompsonian, the extinguishing Hydropath, the Swedish Muscle-Puller, the inflated axiomatic Homeopath, or the general Dulaneyian Medicine Man, exist hardly so much by reason of the simple mindedness of their clients, and credulity of their supporters, as because of the *excellence* of *that* of which they set up a vain and obscure semblance. With colossal effrontery they vaunt their systems and obscenities, and Prometheus-like, steal fire to animate a host of grateful former sufferers of their own creation. Unfortunately it happens that some of their certificate-givers are not myths, but real personages; and amongst this unblushing few are found members and lights of a sister profession that is under particular obligation to the Medical Profession. And the "Dear Public" give ear, and as "*vulgus decipi vult ergo decipitur.*"

Nevertheless, neither Medicine nor her legiti-

mate disciples are robbed of any thing by these charlatans, for the one remains unalterably what it ever was, and the duties, pleasures and rewards of the others are unchanged in their stringency, delight, or importance. The pathway to honor is open to every legitimate son of Esculapius; and if he perform well his part, the laurel of his wreath will be intertwined with the fragrant flowers of love and gratitude that bloom in the heart's garden. He can always secure a competency, oftentimes a moderate independence, and less frequently wealth and its luxuries—and what is far better, he can live to the satisfying of his conscience, and feel himself daily happier as his heart becomes warmer and more fraternally expansive. And this, also, is worthy of especial notice, that the fortune, great or small, acquired by the Physician, is not exposed to annihilation to the same extent as the wealth gained by men in many other vocations; his acquisition is enduring—and whereas few fail of moderate success, it is rare to meet with bankruptcy unless the medical man has unwisely involved himself in outside business or speculation. The merchant who rises to affluence sees strewn around him the ruin of fifty fortunes—

representing original money capital, and years—a life time, it may be—of toil. And he may leave his children or grand-children to poverty, and that, too, with an exceeding great unfitness for retrieving their loss.

It is evident, from what I have had the pleasure of remarking, that the objects and aims of our profession are furthered by the individual progress of its members; and in the age in which we live, when common sense undisguised is continually gaining ascendancy over mysticism, development in the Medical Profession is commensurate with progress in any other. The advance of modern Medicine is characterized not only by the addition of new and valuable observations and facts, but also by facilities for disseminating hoarded knowledge and newly acquired information. It is, in general, remarkable for the plain expression of ideas, instead of the transcendental concealment in which they lay struggling—it is signalized by the simple and demonstrative form of instruction adapted to every thinking neophyte—and generously distinguished by the small expenditure of money required for admission into the schools. Science is no longer immured in gloomy cells, or pent up in black-

letter, condemned to tread the "long drawn aisle." She wears no more the "look severe," but she walks *abroad*, her face radiant with smiles, and with bewitching grace diffuses light and joy everywhere. She has cast aside her ancient and cumbersome habiliments, and goes forth glad-some and buoyant in the beautiful apparel of modesty. The oligarchy which kept her enthralled is overturned by the press and the magic wire; and she is forever free and beloved in her own glorious republic.

For the Physician the New Year is a time of rejoicing. He finds that Time, the tester of all things, has humbled the pride of evanescent riches around him; and that he, with the means of happiness in his grasp is unchecked in his onward career. *He* is spared while calamity falls heavily upon his fellow-men, and their woes awaken fresh sympathies in his heart. He is happy in the enjoyment of rare privileges; and because the welfare of others has been promoted by his efforts. He can reflect with pride and pleasure upon his use of the means afforded him for the accomplishment of the end which his profession in him has had steadily in view—he cherishes the warmest recollection of the kind

co-operation of his fellow-laborers—and he extends ardently the hand of fellowship to every true brother. With harmony among its members our profession advances surely—and may this Society long live, as it unites them in the bonds of fraternal affection, and serries the phalanx that goes out to give battle to the destroyer.

reporting etc, reports - suggesting that per-
sulating cases will still order

Committee in my report — and
recommend - C. Jones essayist,

On motion Dr. Butler Dr. Cook has
added to the list to represent us
in Ann Mrs associates - decided and
of orderly chair.

motion Dr. Eastman adjourned.

Stephen J. Smith - St. John's - 1871
Dinner at Governor's Banquet - 1871
Dr. Ed. Thompson - 1871
Religious - Dr. J. J. L. - 1871
1871 - 1871

Dr. J. J. L. - 1871
Crew - 1871 - 1871

Dr. E. Lloyd Howard - 1871

Dr. C. M. Wright - do -

Dr. J. H. B. - do -

Thomas - 1871 - 1871

Worth - 1871 - 1871

Dr. B. - 1871

Dr. J. J. L. - 1871

Dr. J. J. L. - 1871

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